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FILE ONLY

Kidnap victims' families issue plea on Beirut TV

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP) — The families of four of the seven Americans kidnapped in Beirut over the past 16 months have issued a televised appeal for their kin to be freed "in the name of God."

Choking back tears, relatives of Terry Anderson, the Rev. Benjamin Weir, Peter Kilburn and the Rev. Lawrence Jenco appeared on a 10-minute program shown on Beirut television. Photographs of the kidnap victims also were flashed onto the screen.

The four Americans were among seven kidnapped in west Beirut since March 1984. Islamic Jihad, believed to be made up of pro-Iranian Shi'ite Moslems, claimed responsibility for the abductions and demanded the release of 17 men jailed in Kuwait for the December 1983 bombings of the U.S. and French embassies and of other installations there.

Nabih Berri, the leader of the more moderate Shi'ite Amal militia who brokered the release of 39 Americans held hostage after the hijacking of a TWA jet, said Wednesday that he doubts Islamic Jihad exists, and said the Americans are probably being held by the extremist Shi'ite group known as Hezbollah, or the Party of God.

The relatives' broadcast was made Wednesday night on state television, hours after a statement from Islamic Jihad — or Islamic Holy War — warned the seven Americans would face "a black fate" if the United States moves against Shi'ite hijackers of the TWA jetliner who held Americans hostage in Beirut last month.

The hostages were released Sunday after 17 days in captivity, but the seven Americans kidnapped earlier remain missing.

Judith Blouin and Peggy Say, both sisters of Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent of The Associated Press, kidnapped March 16, made separate appeals which were filmed in May.

"While living in Beirut, Terry learned about the suffering of all the Lebanese people and became determined to bring this thing to the attention of the world," Mrs. Blouin said.

"Now I pray for his safe return to us. Please, in the name of God that we all worship, please release my brother," she said.

Peggy Say began her appeal with "As-salam aleikum," Arabic for "peace be upon you."

She said, "It doesn't matter what we are, Christian, Druze, Moslem Shi'ites, Sunnis, we're all God's children. I beg you in his name to free Terry."

The wife of Presbyterian minister Benjamin Weir, of Berkeley, Calif., abducted May 8, 1984, said her 60-year-old husband has lived and served in Lebanon for 30 years.

"The motivation for his coming to this country was in no way political but rather a deep commitment to the one God, the God of us all," Mrs. Weir said.

A woman who introduced herself as Jamie, sister-in-law of Peter Kilburn, a librarian at the American University of Beirut who has been missing since Dec. 3, 1984, said Mr. Kilburn has been in Beirut for nearly 20 years, during which he was "a quiet university librarian and he was never involved in politics."

A woman who identified herself as the sister of Roman Catholic priest Lawrence Jenco, 50, of Joliet, Ill., head of the Catholic Relief Services in Beirut when he was abducted last Jan. 8, stifled her tears as she spoke.

"He was a man of peace. . . . He did not need to have any political ties to anybody. He was there [in Lebanon] to help those who needed help," she said.

Arabic translations of the Americans' remarks were read as they spoke. The television station's management said the film was provided by the Presidential Palace.

The three other Americans kidnapped in west Beirut are: U.S. Embassy political officer William Buckley, 57, from Medford, Mass., kidnapped March 16, 1984; David Jacobsen, 54, of Huntington Beach, Calif., director of the American University Hospital, kidnapped May 28; and Thomas Sutherland, 53, of Fort Collins, Colo., dean of agriculture at Beirut's American University, abducted on June 9.